

SITUATION REPORT NO. 5

INCIDENT NO. 2000-016

DATE: June 13, 2000

TIME: 5:00 p.m.

TO: Governor Edward T. Schafer
State Capitol
Bismarck, N.D. 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: Flooding -- A series of thunderstorms on June 12-13, with heavy rainfall in excess of 10 inches, caused flooding in northeast North Dakota. High water tables, resulting from seven years of consecutive flooding, continue to cause safety- and health-related problems in some areas of north central, south central and southeast North Dakota. Flooding conditions continue in the Devils Lake area. Devils Lake remains near its historic high level as thousands of acres remain inundated while transportation routes, other infrastructure and communities, as well as rural areas, are threatened. Meanwhile dry conditions that impacted spring planting and that have resulted in grass fires in many areas of North Dakota have improved.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: No change from previous reports.
3. DAMAGES: A series of thunderstorms, with rainfall of up to 10 inches thus far, has been moving across the state, causing flooding in the northeast and resulting in the evacuation of residents along the Turtle River in Grand Forks County. The National Weather Service (NWS) issued a flash flood warning for Eddy, northern Grand Forks and Nelson Counties. By early June 13, recorded rainfall amounts ranged from six inches to 10.05 inches in the three-county area.

Additional rainfall forecasted for northeast North Dakota was expected to result in rapid runoff and possible flooding of ditches and roadways. Flooding was expected along the upper areas of the Sheyenne, Turtle, Goose, Forest and Park Rivers. Ditches and culverts are running full to overflowing.

In Grand Forks County, some residents in the Gilby area and in low-lying areas are being evacuated as the Turtle River rapidly rises. The State Water Commission reported that the Turtle River is 2.5 feet above the flood of record near U.S. Highway 2. The Grand Forks Emergency Operations Center (EOC) staff has received requests for food and medicine to be delivered by boat. Preparations are underway to protect the downstream community of Manvel. Concerned that the water will rise too rapidly to fill sandbags, Grand Forks officials were trying to secure clay, back hoes and trucks. Evacuating residents are being advised to plug sewers and remove items from lower levels of structures.

Earlier in the day, in the Gilby area, torrential rainfall flooded basements and stranded rural residents whose farm driveways had been washed out. The Turtle River near Gilby was rising rapidly, as much as one-half-foot per hour. County officials requested that the U.S. Air Force Base in Grand Forks send 50 volunteers to assist with sandbagging efforts. In Larimore, floodwaters were "curb-to-curb" on city streets and had inundated lift stations, prompting officials to request that residents not use water. Residents were also without power for five hours.

A search and rescue mission is underway for a person who was missing after the vehicle in which he was a passenger struck a road washout near Kolding Dam, seven miles west of Larimore in Grand Forks County. A fatality occurred at the accident scene, the North Dakota Highway Patrol reported.

The Highway Patrol reported that water has inundated 400 feet of N.D. Highway 15, between Northwood and McVile. On the U.S. Highway 2 overpass at Petersburg, a washout on an abutment has reduced traffic to one lane. Up to seven feet of water was flowing over N.D. Highway 18 bridge on the south branch of the Turtle River, north of Larimore.

N.D. Parks and Recreation officials report that the rising river has cut off access to the west part of Turtle River State Park. Staff members are evacuating campers from the campground areas. At least eight inches of water has inundated the park.

Eight miles west of Larimore, in Grand Forks County, a 200- to 300-foot wide tornado touched down in open country. Another tornado briefly touched down five miles west of the Grand Forks Air Force Base.

Wind gusts of up to 60 miles per hour and hail measuring 1.75 inches in diameter were reported in Nelson County. Road washouts were reported throughout the three-county area.

In the city of New Rockford in Eddy County, up to 25 residents of an apartment building were evacuated after a ceiling collapsed. Eddy County officials reported the city of New Rockford received hail and more than four inches of rain.

Most of the streets in the city of Grafton in Walsh County flooded after the area received 5.7 inches of rain. Several basements had water seepage, including the Administration Building for Walsh County. A gas line break occurred when a portion of a commercial building fell; gas was disconnected to the building. A water main break occurred under a flooded street, leaving a section of the town without water. Because the street remains inundated, the break will not be repaired until the water drains off. A large portion of agricultural land in the Grafton area remains under water. A tornado warning was issued for Walsh County after funnels were sighted in the Voss and Minto areas, but touchdowns never occurred. Tornado shelters were opened in Minto and Grafton. County

reports of rainfall range from 2.5 to 3 inches in the eastern third, to 1.3 to 1.7 inches in the Park River area. Up to 7.9 inches of rain was reported north of Grafton. Pea-sized hail fell throughout the county.

In Pembina County, officials report that storm conditions produced high winds and rainfall amounts of one-half to 4.5 inches. One home in Drayton was struck by lightning and caught fire. Firefighters with the Drayton Fire Department quickly contained the fire so that damage was minimal.

4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: City and county officials and representatives of rural fire departments, sheriff's offices, city and county highway crews, emergency management offices and extension services are providing assistance.

STATE: The N.D. Highway Patrol, State Water Commission, State Radio Communications, Civil Air Patrol and North Dakota Emergency Management have been providing assistance.

FEDERAL: The Natural Resource Conservation Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have been conducting inspections of dams, and the National Weather Service has been monitoring storm conditions and providing periodic updates.

5. VOLUNTEER ACTION: Anticipating that damage costs will be substantial, based on "windshield estimates," the American Red Cross has assigned a disaster number to the incident, DR-394-Eastern North Dakota Sector 00 Flood.

The American Red Cross provided housing and meals to families evacuated from the Gilby area.

Weather spotters have been monitoring conditions.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: Staffs from the N.D. State Water Commission (SWC) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) are conducting inspections of dams along the Turtle River to evaluate their structural integrity. Initial reports indicate that the dams are functioning as designed. Two to three feet of flow was recorded in the emergency spillway of the Larimore Dam (Dam #9), but no erosion appeared to be taking place at the spillway outlet. Water has risen to the second stage of the principal spillway for the Kolding Dam (Dam #6) but no flow had occurred in the emergency spillway. On Dam #7, south of U.S. Highway 2, water was flowing in the emergency spillway and some erosion had occurred at the spillway outlet. Road washouts have obstructed access to some of the dam sites.

The Civil Air Patrol provided an aerial reconnaissance flight of the affected area, including the Turtle River, for SWC staff.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has dispatched a team to inspect the Homme Dam in Walsh County.

The Grand Forks Emergency Operations Center reported that county highway crews were barricading washouts. Sandbags had been delivered to the Gilby area along with gas pumps and waders. The county road superintendent is assessing damages to roads. An assessment of damages to homes is also underway.

Pembina County officials reported that the fire threat caused by dry conditions has been mitigated at this point by recent precipitation. The County U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Board has scheduled an emergency meeting for June 14 to review drought damage reports. Farmers have indicated that damage from drought conditions may be irreversible, particularly for the small grain crops.

The city of Grafton issued a disaster declaration because of damages resulting from excessive runoff and torrential rains. The city of Grafton has provided a sandbag machine to Gilby. The County USDA Board was scheduled to meet on June 13 to discuss the storms' damages and impacts on drought conditions.

7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: With the exception of continuing technical support, the Grand Forks EOC has requested volunteers from the Grand Forks Air Force Base to assist with sandbag operations in Gilby.
8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: A Larimore-based flying service was providing assistance with search and rescue operations in Grand Forks County.
9. OTHER: Situation Reports published by North Dakota Emergency Management are posted on the Division's Internet home page. The address is:
<http://www.state.nd.us/dem>.

Douglas C. Friez, State Director